



Job training program helps people into employment

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Getting the necessary training required for a particular job can sometimes seem like a Catch-22 situation. You can't get the job because you don't have the required certifications, but you can't get the certifications because you don't have the job.

That's where the New Mexico Environmental Job Training Program at Santa Fe Community College (SFCC) comes in. Funded by an EPA grant, and with support from Los Alamos National Laboratory, the program gave its most recent set of graduates the chance to complete 168 hours of intensive training in a little under five weeks in January and February.

The 20 students, who were unemployed, underemployed or on low incomes, earned 12 state or federal environmental and safety compliance certifications, preparing them to be employed as technicians for environmental cleanup, remediation and decommissioning projects.

There is currently a great demand for environmental or hazardous waste removal technicians. Between 80 and 230 of these positions are listed on online jobs boards per week in New Mexico.

"It would cost potential employers approximately \$4500 in initial training costs to give an employee the skills and certifications our students received as part of the program," says Janet Kerley, Environmental Safety and Health Program Manager/Instructor at SFCC.

Training completed by graduates included:

- HAZWOPER General Site Worker, Level B
- OSHA 30 hr Construction Standards
- Environmental Assessments
- Environmental Sampling
- CPR and first aid

NM Workforce Solutions offered training on job interviewing skills, resume preparation, and job assistance programs. There was also an employers' panel discussion with representatives from Los Alamos National Laboratory, NuStar Energy and Echelon Environmental.

"The program is valuable not just to the students who earn the certifications, but to potential employers like Los Alamos National Laboratory," says Carole Rutten from

the Lab's Community Partnerships Office, who took part in the panel discussion. "It's important for the Laboratory to be able to hire local people with the skills we need."

Laboratory radiological control technicians Jose Griego and Chelsey Rodriguez also gave presentations on their experiences, while Lab recruiters Trevor Budge and Rich Christiansen talked to the students about the application process and gave recommendations on how best to prepare resumes to get interviews.

"The most rewarding parts of the program is seeing the pride in the eyes of the graduates and their families when they receive their certificates and they know they finished a significant challenge," says Kerley. "It's great to hear the hope in their voices when they call me and tell me about their new jobs or careers that pay well and have benefits."

Recruiting for the next session of the program starts in June, with the classes starting in September.

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